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SRI LANKA SUPPORTING REGIONAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAM (SuRG)

JANUARY – MARCH 2009 QUARTERLY REPORT

APRIL 2009

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACLG	Assistant Commissioner for Local Government
APS	Annual Program Statement
BPA	Business for Peace Alliance
CBO	Community Based Organization
CEaT	Community Empowerment and Transformation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CLG	Commissioner for Local Government
COP	Chief of Party
CORE	Connecting Regional Economies Program
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DG	Democracy and Governance
FLICT	Facilitating Local Initiatives for Conflict Transformation
GGRC	Good Governance Resource Centre
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka
ICLA	Information, Counseling, and Legal Assistance
LA	Local Authority
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTT	Neelan Thiruchelvam Trust
PIRS	Performance Indicator Reference Sheet
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PSM	Peace Secretariat for Muslims
SLCJ	Sri Lanka College of Journalism
SLPI	Sri Lanka Press Institute
SL. R	Sri Lankan Rupee
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
SuRG	Supporting Regional Governance Program
TA	Technical Assistance
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNOCHA	United Nations Office of Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
WRDS	Women's Rural Development Society

I.0 INTRODUCTION

In March 2008, ARD, Inc. was awarded contract no. 383-C-00-08-000501-00 to implement the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Sri Lanka's Supporting Regional Governance Program (SuRG). The three to five year initiative was designed to build on USAID/Sri Lanka's democracy and governance efforts to address development needs resulting from the ongoing conflict. The program supports regional governance in the Eastern province and Polonnaruwa district by focusing on four program components (social equity, local governance, community empowerment and transformation, and open dialogue) with intertwining activities which reinforce governance improvements around the betterment of human and community security.

This report covers the period from January 1 – March 30, 2009 and details progress on contract implementation activities and management and administration. Highlights for the quarter include:

- Seventeen aspiring journalists received SuRG Journalism Scholarships to attend the Sri Lanka College of Journalism 2009 Diploma Programme. The scholarships were presented to recipients by the U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka at the College's opening ceremony.
- SuRG opened its third office in Ampara.
- A grant for Sri Lankan Rupees (SL. Rs) 3,538,000 was awarded for the "Support for War Affected Widows and Human Rights Education in Trincomalee District" project.
- A grant for SL Rs. 12,553,250 was awarded to the "Building Muslim Consensus" project.
- A proposal development workshop was held for representatives from seven organizations from the Eastern province which have submitted concept notes on community empowerment and transformation.
- An Annual Program Statement for grants to organizations based in the Eastern province and Polonnaruwa district was developed and distributed.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by SuRG and 11 year one partner local authorities at a SuRG workshop on Community Participation and Local Governance.

2.0 CONTRACT IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

2.1 SOCIAL EQUITY

The SuRG Social Equity team continued this quarter to move grant activities forward. Grants were signed, activities initiated, and discussions and program development with future local and national grantees continued.

2.1.1 Grants

Activities got underway under the following social equity grants:

- ARD001 – “Analysis of the Judicial/Prosecutorial System Regarding the Right to Life/Liberty in Sri Lanka” research project; and
- ARD003 – “Support for War Affected Widows and Human Rights Education in Trincomalee District” project.

During the quarter, SuRG’s partner finalized a research framework and methodology for the “Analysis of the Judicial/Prosecutorial System Regarding the Right to Life/Liberty in Sri Lanka” research project. The partner also collected both reported and unreported habeas corpus and supreme court judgments for analysis in the study.

In January, a grant of SL Rs. 3,588,000 was awarded for its “Support for War Affected Widows and Human Rights Education in Trincomalee District” program. Participants were selected for both components of the program and activities initiated. Thirty women from Trincomalee district were selected to receive individual and group support to help rebuild their lives and maintain their families. During this quarter, nine women received support for the initiation of economic activities, including opening shops, breeding poultry, and rearing cattle.

The Human Rights Education component was inaugurated on March 7. Two batches of 100 participants (59 male and 41 females) representing 10 government institutions, eight national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), seven international NGOs, four private companies, one religious organization, and two educational institutions are participating in the weekly programs which will be held for the next six months. Each participant was required to contribute a fee of SL. Rs 1,000 to attend the program. This quarter’s sessions covered introduction to human rights; basic international human rights instruments; fundamental rights and remedies; and UN mechanisms and remedies.

Discussions are moving forward regarding a grant to support legal aid for the East and the North. The Social Equity team has been working with Helvetas, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and

NTT—other primary funders—to coordinate support. It is expected that a grant will be signed in the coming quarter.

Throughout the quarter the Social Equity team continued to explore relationships and potential support for a range of organizations in the Eastern province. Exploratory discussions regarding support and collaboration have also been held with national human rights organizations.

2.2 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

During this quarter, the SuRG Community Empowerment and Transformation (CEaT) team continued to work closely with potential partners to help them develop activities and concept notes. The team reviewed 12 concept notes from NGOs in the Eastern province and invited seven organizations to a SuRG proposal development workshop. Organizations were selected based on technical capacity, social mobilization capacity, reputation, and the quality of their concept paper. SuRG CEaT staff made technical assistance visits to each selected organization to further hone their concept papers and prepare them for the workshop.

The three-day residential SuRG-facilitated Proposal Development Workshop took participants through the project cycle, logical framework, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation. The “Do No Harm” framework and principles were integrated into the project cycle and logical framework components. Participants, two to three from each organization, applied workshop concepts to their concept notes in order to turn them into full proposals. In the closing session, participants presented their project plans and feedback was provided by the Facilitating Local Initiatives for Conflict Transformation (FLICT) Director and the SuRG Chief of Party (COP).

Further technical assistance was provided after the workshop with field visits to the Trincomalee participants and by telephone to others. Full proposals will be considered under the Annual Program Statement (see Section 2.5.3 below).

The CEaT team has also been working with Colombo-based organizations. The team provided technical assistance to the Business for Peace Alliance (BPA) to help them develop a program for the Eastern province Chambers of Commerce. SuRG worked with BPA to develop a one-day strategy and planning session with representatives of the Eastern province Chambers. The meeting was held at the SuRG office and brought together representatives from the Batticaloa and Trincomalee Chambers in an effort to collect precise information on the Chambers and their current capacity. The group explored issues preventing broader representation and looked at possible tactics to expand membership and possible areas for SuRG support.

The Ampara Chamber declined BPA’s invitation to participate in the session. They plan to respond to the SuRG Annual Program Statement (APS) independently rather than work through BPA. BPA will submit a proposal to SuRG for regional work after further work is done in the field to ensure that BPA has the full support of its member Chambers for the activities proposed. The proposal will include work with the Batticaloa, Trincomalee, and Polonnaruwa Chambers.

SuRG has also been exploring collaboration with a Colombo-based organization working on women’s empowerment, community development, and local government in Batticaloa and Trincomalee. They would like SuRG to support their ongoing work with Women’s Rural Development Societies (WRDSs). The program is based on the notion that the WRDS is a key, and in many cases the only, vehicle through which women can participate and have a voice in local development and governance decisions. The organization helps to register those WRDSs that are not legally registered and provides technical assistance and capacity building to members to identify and address the needs they feel are most important to their communities. SuRG staff visited three of the WRDSs that they have been working with in Batticaloa and in Trincomalee districts. They are expected to present a proposal to SuRG in the coming quarter.

At the request of USAID, SuRG supplied 200 backpacks branded with the USAID logo to be distributed to schoolchildren in Trincomalee as part of a humanitarian visit by the U.S. Navy planned for February. The backpacks were ordered and made before the visit by the Navy was cancelled. The bags will be used for future United States Government (USG) humanitarian activities.

2.2.1 Peace Secretariat for Muslims

In March, SuRG awarded grant ARD004 for SL. Rs. 12,553,250 to the Peace Secretariat for Muslims (PSM) for their “Building Muslim Consensus” project. The project will support regional multi-stakeholder forums, the Muslim Peace Assemblies, and the launching and development of a National Muslim Peace Assembly to ensure the active participation and voice of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka’s political process, especially in regards to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. These forums are designed to ensure Muslim rights are addressed and protected within regional and national political processes and negotiations.

Project activities got underway this quarter with mobilization workshops in Trincomalee and Ampara.

2.3 LOCAL GOVERNANCE

SuRG continued work with its 11 local authority (LA) partners this quarter which included training needs assessment in each of the 11 LAs, a workshop on Good Governance for LA chairman and secretaries from Batticaloa and Ampara district, and a workshop on Community Participation and Local Governance for all 11 LAs and their secretaries. In March, SuRG formalized its relationship with partner LAs by signing a Memorandum of Understanding outlining SuRG’s technical assistance and training goals and the LA’s commitment to support and participate in these efforts.

2.3.1 Training Needs Assessment

SuRG conducted a focus group discussion in each partner LA with LA Chairmen, secretaries, and a range of other officials including Local Government Assistants, Management Assistants, Technical Officers, Public Health Inspectors, Officers in Charge of Wards, and officials from Rural Development Societies. In addition, individual written surveys were completed by 146 elected officials, administrative staff, representatives of Rural Development Societies, and other local stakeholders. The SuRG local government team also interviewed the Commissioner of Local Government (CLG) for the Eastern province and the Assistant Commissioners of Local Government (ACLG) for all three Eastern province districts as part of the assessment.

The table below highlights challenges and issues raised for each SuRG local governance component objective.

Local Governance Training Needs Assessment	
SuRG Objective	Key Issues / Challenges
Improve skills of LA elected members and representatives to fulfill core functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of education of elected members • Lack of coordination with other local officials and departments of the central government, and lack of external coordination • Not enough staff • Lack of training • Lack of motivation
Increase public participation in decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAs lack understanding of need and methods of citizen engagement • Fragile civil society and weak community-based organizations (CBOs)

Local Governance Training Needs Assessment	
SuRG Objective	Key Issues / Challenges
Increase transparency in local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens' lack of awareness and understanding of their rights and duties
Enhance enabling environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of policy mechanism/framework for implementation • Lack of motivation for good governance • Lack of coordination • Weak relationships and little coordination with other government institutions

The assessment identified the following priorities for SuRG training:

- General office administration;
- The legal and regulatory framework relevant to local authorities and government;
- Formulation of bi-laws;
- Information technology;
- Language (Sinhala and Tamil);
- Budgeting and financial management;
- Leadership; and
- Communication.

2.3.2 Training Workshops: Good Governance and Community Participation

Good Governance Workshops were held in January in Ampara and Batticaloa for LA Chairmen and their secretaries or key administrative staff. In Ampara, the ACLG joined the workshop and in Batticaloa, the ACLG and Good Governance Resource Centre (GGRC) Coordinator participated in the workshop. The workshops focused on basic principles of good governance, and the ACLGs and GGRC Coordinator facilitated discussions on the Citizen Charter. Participants pointed out that insufficient staff and capacity and motivation of current staff are key barriers to implementation of the citizen charter and other good governance initiatives.

In Batticaloa, the workshop was followed by a meeting with the USAID/Sri Lanka Mission Director, Ms. Rebecca Cohn, and the USAID/Washington Office Director for South Asia, Mr. Flynn Fuller. Each LA Chairman gave a brief overview of issues and needs in his Pradeshiya Sabha. They all described how they had come to run for office. They also raised concerns about not being able to meet the expectations of their communities because they are allotted such a small amount of money, much of which often does not find its way into their budgets. The Eastern province Commissioner for Local Government also joined the discussion highlighting the need for training and support to local authorities in the province.

In March, SuRG held a training workshop on Community Participation and Local Government for all 11 partner LA Chairmen and their secretaries. The SuRG local government team shared best practices and models for community engagement and participants discussed current initiatives to work with communities in their Pradeshiya Sabha. Participants were then asked to develop and present strategies to improve and increase their work with communities. In addition, Mr. Rizvi, the CORE Program Manager, made a presentation on CORE and its proposed activities, sparking a lively discussion on economic and livelihood needs and concerns in the participants' communities.

2.3.3 Memorandums of Understanding

SuRG signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each of the current 11 partner LAs. Each MOU was signed by an LA or Union Council Chairmen, the CLG of the Eastern province and the SuRG COP. The

MOUs outline a partnership for the coming year in which SuRG will provide technical assistance and training to help elected officials and administrative staff of local authorities better carry out their responsibilities, build general management and administrative capacity, engage local citizenry, and enhance communication and leadership skills. Each LA in turn has committed to support and participate in SuRG's initiatives and work in coordination with citizens and other relevant government officials to apply the principles of SuRG technical assistance and training in their Pradeshiya Sabha or Union Council.

2.4 OPEN DIALOGUE

The Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) initiated SuRG grant ARD002 activities this quarter, providing 17 aspiring journalists with scholarships to attend the Sri Lanka College of Journalism Diploma Programme 2009. The scholarships were awarded at the College's opening ceremony attended by students, professors, and College and SLPI directors. The Honorable Robert Blake, U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka, was the Chief Guest and officially awarded the SuRG scholarships. Classes began after the ceremony.

2.5 CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES

2.5.1 Annual Program Statement

SuRG developed and disseminated an APS targeting NGOs, CBOs, professional or trade associations, chambers of commerce, trade unions, religious institutions, cooperative societies, and other civil society organizations with headquarters in the Eastern or North Central provinces to implement programs that advance SuRG objectives and complement SuRG activities. Grants of between SL Rs. 500,000 and 3,500,000 will be awarded for projects of up to one year in duration that address at least one of the following issues:

- *Social Equity*: expanding strategies for protecting and defending human security, including promoting more effective legal aid, information, and representation; and supporting mechanisms for victims of human rights abuses.
- *Community Empowerment and Transformation*: strengthening social mechanisms that advance multi-ethnic, religious, and community understanding, communication, and trust; and increase participation by women, youth, and other marginalized segments of the community.
- *Open Dialogue*: reinforcing space for public discourse and information dissemination on governance issues by strengthening regional journalist associations and media outlets, increasing reporting from the Eastern province and Polonnaruwa District, and facilitating public discussion and debate at the community and regional level through non-traditional communication outlets and fora.

The APS was distributed in English, Tamil, and Sinhala to 55 organizations directly, through the United Nations Office of Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA)'s interagency list serves in Batticaloa and Ampara Districts, at an interagency meeting in Batticaloa District, and at a meeting with 15 of Polonnaruwa District's 18 NGOs.

Grants will be awarded based on a two-tiered application process. The first screening of proposals will be based on review of a concept note. Those organizations whose concept notes are selected in the first round will be invited to attend a proposal development workshop and asked to submit a full proposal two weeks following the workshop. Concept notes are due early next quarter.

2.6 PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN

The SuRG Chief of Party and Monitoring and Evaluation Program Manager attended a USAID Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) workshop in January in support of the development of the Mission's indicators and results reporting. As part of the exercise, Performance Indicator Reference Sheets were developed for SuRG indicators, and the SuRG PMP was adjusted to ensure consistency with USAID indicators and reporting requirements.

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